



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.

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Editorial

Was it an attempt to exercise their episcopal muscles which prompted the Australian bishops to write jointly to all Catholic parishes, telling the faithful to vote 'NO' in the recent same-sex marriage plebiscite? They no doubt assumed that the faithful would obey, just as previous generations dutifully attended Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, voted as the Church directed, ate their fish on Fridays and sent their children to Catholic Schools – all with the threat of ex-communication and/or eternal damnation held, like the sword of Damocles, over their heads.

Despite such attempts to strongly influence both Catholics and our society, the bishops failed to recall Archbishop Coleridge's admission: 'We are not the power in the land which we once were!' (*ARCvoice* 62). Nor did they recognise how much the consciousness of Catholics has changed – as evidenced by rapidly dwindling congregations. Disillusioned by the recent sexual abuse scandals and with increasing confidence in being guided by their own consciences, the exodus is profound, possibly terminal. People have already voted with their feet.

But there was a ray of hope showing a different perspective when newly-appointed Bishop Vincent Long did not take the line of Episcopal 'group think' and declared that he would vote 'YES', pointing out the clear distinction between the sacrament of marriage and the civil law that attempts to protect human rights in this case. Not surprisingly, when he agreed to give the keynote address to the Catalyst for Renewal dinner at Hunter's Hill on the 20th of October, his presence was a great drawcard and the diners were not disappointed. As he outlined his vision for the Catholic Church in Australia, Bishop Long touched on many of the issues advocated in *ARCvoice* since its inception 17 years ago. His talk was like a breath of fresh air.

Knowing how much the content would be of interest to all our members, Rob Brian and I approached Bishop Long after the dinner to congratulate him and to ask for permission to reprint his presentation. He was already familiar with our newsletter and kindly agreed to make the text available. However, repeated requests to the office of the Parramatta Diocese have failed to achieve this. The Catalyst team have also, so far, been unsuccessful. Is it possible that within his own administration there is someone resisting

dissemination of his wonderful pastoral vision? However, much of the content of his presentation is contained in another address entitled: *The Priesthood in Australia: Reflections on its future in the light of the Royal Commission*. *

Margaret Knowlden
Editor

*An address delivered by Bishop Vincent Long OFM at the Manly Reunion gathering on 30th August 2017 published in instalments in *Catholic Outlook* (the news website of the Parramatta Diocese), re-published in the Summer 2017 edition of *The Smag*, the Quarterly Magazine of the National Council of Priests of Australia, or can be obtained from the editor by e-mail at mknowlden@bigpond.com

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Thoughts at Christmastide

Gabe Lomas

Humans began as minuscule chemical particles, as much plants as animals, and gradually evolved into what we see today—although the actual form we now have is incomplete, and will predictably change quite a bit before we have run our course. To date, the evolution of humans has taken several millions of years, and what we shall become on this earth is not known.

The one who made humans is, as things are at present, unknown and unknowable. This is the one we speak of as Divine, the Creator. Many will say that this one can be known only by experience, not intellectually. Intellectually we can only guess and speculate about the Divine, whom we say creates and sustains all things.

Humans formed tribes and communes and evolved as social beings. They learnt to hunt in packs and to divide the spoils. They learnt how to till the soil and harvest crops, to work together at harvest times and gather more in.

Human societies grew more and more complex, and became more and more dense as they changed shape and form. They changed from being in harmony with other parts of creation to being discordant both with other creatures and with themselves.

Humans learnt to be dissatisfied, and sometimes openly angry. They learnt to cheat and to steal. They learnt to do things that did not promote harmony in the community and which were good only for themselves, not for society. They called these things ‘bad’.

Things that they called ‘good’ were such as co-operating with others, being kind towards other creatures, speaking to and respecting the Divine, and seeking to live in harmony with one other. They sought to educate the young, to care for the elderly and sick, to run their societies along fair and just lines, and to deal with everyone fairly and equitably.

Slowly, they learnt more about themselves, and how they had evolved from simple beings into more complex ones, from small societies into larger ones that governed and covered the planet. In the course

of this their values had changed and shifted, so that when confronted with adversary they stood together, and when faced with easy times they tended to slacken off and squabble amongst themselves.

They began to set aside certain times to remember significant events, and these too shifted and changed with the passage of time. Thus, some people used the middle of Winter, tied up as it was with other beliefs and rituals, to celebrate the birth of the Divine. Christians took this over about six thousand years later, and festivities occur at what we have now come to call Christmas.

Two accounts of the birth of the Divine that were eagerly absorbed by early and subsequent Christian communities are the stories attributed to Matthew and Luke. In these we find records of visits by royalty, a virgin birth, angels singing, shepherds in fields, despotic rulers—all the drama and colour that go to make the events so vivid.

Yet, Mark and John have none of these. Why?

Well, compilers of Matthew and Luke seem to have been concerned that the Jesus story should begin with his conception, not with when he began to preach. They each devoted the first two chapters of their accounts to this, using Hebrew themes that were well known, and wrapped up their narratives in them. At the turn of the first century, when the gospels were being compiled, events were usually put into story form. And this was the perfect setting for that process.

The audiences of the Matthean stories would have seen the parallels between Herod and Pharaoh, have been able to identify Herod as the villain of the piece, and have expected and anticipated the deliverance of the infant. People would have had a cultural expectation that the magic of the magi would be imperfect—revealing neither the exact whereabouts of the infant nor the means by which to escape from Herod.

Those exposed to the Lucan stories are introduced to shepherds astounded by angels proclaiming the good news of the infant’s birth. There is no star shining in the East, but instead a stable with a manger for a bed. The shepherds are witnesses to the proclamation and are the first visitors to the manger. Instead of royalty, it’s the lowly shepherds who are chosen to visit the Divine.

Christmas is a time to ponder all these things in our hearts: where we come from, where we’re going to, who we are, what we are called to be. It is a very

solemn period, given to thanksgiving and rejoicing for the contradictions and anomalies in our lives, and also for who we are to others and who they are to us.

Our reflections at this time of year transcend cultural factors of time and space, and rest in the unfolding of the Divine birth around us. Our challenge is to find ways of bringing forth the Divine in our own lives and in the lives of others. □

Further reading:

Raymond E Brown, S. S. 1978. *An Adult Christ at Christmas*. Minnesota: Liturgical Press.

(a good read, highly recommended)



Gabe Lomas's opening sentence was immediately a stand-out subject for satire and support to the author's well-chosen opener. My art history took me to the Renaissance times when the greats like Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci were grappling with the things written about in Gabe's article. But in Renaissance times they had no certainty of science—as we do in our modern era. Of course, Leonardo came close, regarded by some as a multi-talented and skilled genius who I guess would have indefinable suspicions of 'chemical particles' in terms of physical creation.

This is not denigrating the intelligent searching of meaning by Michelangelo who, more than Leonardo, had to deal with the day-to-day demands of popes Julius II and later Leo X. Julius pestered the artist to complete the Sistine and would proceed into the work-site demanding to know when the job would be completed—on one occasion taking a stick to Michelangelo. Julius later sent money and apologies. Meanwhile Michelangelo closed the work

-site, took the money and went off to his family in Florence. He later returned and continued work.

Michelangelo's personality was troubled with his homosexuality and his religion. He became somewhat reticent and solitary. Yet he was unflinching in his accepting of his talents and creativity to the extent that, when being pushed, he would retaliate assertively. When Julius chastised him in front of his team, Michelangelo would down brushes and leave the worksite.

Pope Julius II (Papacy 1503-1513) commissioned the painting of the Sistine ceiling in May 1508 and Michelangelo Bounarroti (1475-1564) completed it in 1512. The 'story' of Michelangelo fills many pictorial and academic publications while there are numerous websites for quick perusal.

Alan Holroyd
ARCvoice Illustrator

Recommended:

<http://www.history.com/topics/michelangelo>

Clericalism is alive and well in the Catholic Church

Anne O'Brien

12 September 2017

The Royal Commission has provided few grounds for optimism concerning the future of the Catholic Church in Australia. The institution is moribund and its leaders are unable or unwilling to face reality.

Despite the history of criminal negligence dating back decades, Church leaders have absolved themselves from responsibility for the shocking manner in which victims have been treated. Bishops, clergy and religious have shown inadequate and insufficient compunction concerning such criminal behaviour: they owed allegiance solely to the Vatican and to no one else, neither their own Catholic community nor civil society.

During Case 50, Ms Gail Furness, Counsel Assisting, and other members of the Commission grilled five Metropolitan Archbishops. Almost unwittingly these archbishops admitted that the sexual abuse scandal was both a catastrophic failure of leadership, and represented criminal negligence of the duty of care for innocent children.

Both Ms Furness and Justice Peter McClellan stressed that all the apologies, publication of practices, policies and guidelines would not be sufficient to eradicate child sexual abuse by clergy. The Archbishops had to address the leadership failure, understand why it had happened, and implement changes.

Archbishop Costelloe of Perth perceived the Church as being special, unique, a law unto itself, immune from criticism and scrutiny. Brisbane Archbishop Coleridge argued that Church structures are fixed in stone and the Australian Bishops are not able to change governance structures. However, Christ neither willed nor established any structures.

Archbishop Fisher of Sydney conceded that their self-absorption was designed to protect themselves, to prevent scandal, avoid people thinking less of the clergy, the bishops, the religious, or the institution. Nowhere during Case 50 was there any mention of

Jesus' teaching on causing innocent children to be scandalised: *It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble.*

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council, has stated that child sexual abuse has broken the heart of the Church. Not only was there 'brand damage' but also a high level of distrust in the bishops: 50 per cent of those who attend church weekly consider them 'untrustworthy', as do 70 percent of those who identify themselves as Catholics.

This breakdown in relationship between the Catholic people and their bishops is now almost irreparable. The Church has lost its roots. It no longer subscribes to St Paul's teaching that the Christian community is a society of equals where leadership is elected by the community's assent, free from patriarchal notions of social determinism or patronage. Clericalism has eroded this original vision of Church so that it has more in common with pre-Christian tribalism than with Christ.

The 'evil' of Clericalism

Clericalism is a deviant culture of social elitism, entitlement and privilege which developed out of a particular theological understanding whereby, at ordination, a man's very being is elevated to a level of existence superior to that of other human beings. The grades of hierarchical rank, status and power are integral to this distorted culture. Although many priests would probably reject these notions now, Clericalism, nonetheless, has had an extremely negative impact on Catholic life for centuries.

Clericalism has led to appalling misuses of power: lack of accountability, no shared responsibility, and no transparency at every level of Church life.

This 'evil' as Pope Francis has described it, is a key characteristic of the clerical caste whose teaching has often shaped the thinking of many lay adherents. Fr. Richard Rohr comments:

Once we saw the clerical state as a place of advancement ...once ordination was not a form of initiation but a continuation of patriarchal patterns, the authentic preaching of the Gospel became the exception rather than the norm... like a secret social contract between clergy and laity...

We agree not to tell you anything that would make you uncomfortable, and you will keep coming to our services (‘Jesus’ Invitation: Follow Me,’ *Center for Action and Contemplation*, October 16, 2016).

An over-inflated understanding of priesthood along with a narrow, restricted theology of ministry has resulted in a sacramental famine in this country and abroad. Occasional stories about clerical misuse of church funds and an over-indulgent lifestyle have caused scandal. The culture of misogyny, which lies at the heart of Clericalism, is a causal factor in denying diaconal and priestly ordination to women, and in shutting them out the highest levels of governance in the Church.

The lack of dynamic leadership exists from the highest level to many of the parish clergy. Most priests are aging and many are demoralised. Parishes are being closed or amalgamated, and people are denied the sacramental and pastoral care necessary for a healthy Church. It will take several generations for the Church to regenerate, even with the most enlightened solutions. There is no guarantee that this will eventuate.

The Church exists primarily in parishes. Catholics have left the Church in droves: approximately only ten percent are regular Mass-goers and this number is expected to decrease.

Sr Joan Chittister makes clear that ‘Religion is not for its own sake. It is not for the sake of organization or hierarchy, social order or social status. The purpose of religion is to lead us beyond even itself to union with God...’

Many Catholics have been indoctrinated into a rule book mentality about the Church and not been led to the person of Christ and his Gospel. The leaders of the Church interviewed at the Royal Commission gave no indication that their duty was to assist us to ever-deepening union with the God of Jesus in our daily lives.

The Church teaches that Sacraments lead us to union with the God of Jesus. But very few Catholics would support this tenet. To the contrary, clerics have often used the Sacraments to impose its laws on its members, thereby alienating us further. You don’t believe me?

Examine the requirements demanded for reception of baptism; for attendance at Mass and communion; for the celebration of funerals.

Catholics are bypassing the Church and choosing civil celebrants for the celebration of their marriages, funerals and naming ceremonies.

What happens when parents want to enrol their child in a Catholic school? Think of the torments that have often encumbered a ‘mixed marriage’? Have our Sacraments really led us to experience the presence of Jesus and God in our lives? Have they sometimes been burdensome?

Alienation and powerlessness of the laity

No wonder many Catholics feel alienated from the Catholic Church. They have lost their sense of belonging to a life-giving community. Sometimes this situation has been exacerbated due to the appointment of a parish clergy. While open to priests of other cultures, parishioners can experience real problems arising from the language and culture of clerical appointees. Difficulties can arise in the areas of finance and consultation with parishioners who are often deprived of an effective voice in the running of their local communities, and who have little or no recourse to mediation in many cases. Inexperienced clergy sometimes assume a competence that they do not possess. Where there is an absence of competence and communication between the priest and school staff, much harm can be done. Complaints to headquarters seldom give cause for hope. Secrecy is the order of the day!

The question of seminarians, seminary training and post-ordination registration and supervision was very relevant to the Royal Commissioners. Readiness for a life of celibacy was debated. The Archbishops gave no evidence of any overall supervision of clergy.

No one appears to want to address real issues and possible solutions. Clericalism is the elephant in the room. By and large, members of the clerical caste have given us no grounds for confidence in their leadership – at any level.

Paul G. Power offers characteristics of leaders:

Truly effective leaders create a vision to which others can commit, empower the members of the organisation to work responsibly towards attainment of that vision, hold them accountable for the outcome and acknowledge their efforts through considered recognition, praise and reward (*InPsych*, 39, 4, August 2017).

Using Power's insights, whom could you nominate to lead the Church at the diocesan, archdiocesan and parish level?

Francis Sullivan warns that, if engaged and informed Catholics don't continue to push for change, then the reactionaries will overcome and nothing will change. He stressed that this is a very dangerous time for the Catholic Church in Australia: our Church as a religion could become a marginalised rump, stripped of credibility and relevance.

Sullivan continues:

'We need a stringent policy of putting the right people, with the right skills, in the right places all the time...we cannot afford the blunders of incompetent administration, advisors and minders...[nor] the fumbled attempts to use spin and PR to protect and cottonwool Church leaders from facing the consequences of their actions, or in many cases, inactions.'

Episcopal conferences must take up the offer of Pope Francis to explore the idea of ordaining '*viri*

probati,' mature, educated laymen to the priesthood. Women must be appointed to senior positions within the governance of the Catholic Church in Australia. We need bold and visionary leaders to take up the invitation of the Royal Commission to examine closely and critically the issues related to obligatory celibacy in the priesthood and the 'rationale' of seminary formation. With the ordination of *viri probati*, current seminary issues would virtually evaporate.

If the requirements of celibacy and male sexual identity were removed, we would have little difficulty in firing up our parishes. The laity, on the whole, are ready and waiting for new options.

Anne O'Brien is a former Sister of St Joseph where she taught at both primary and secondary levels. Since then she has worked in The Catholic Education Office of Victoria, and in two Melbourne parishes. She is a registered psychologist and civil celebrant.

This article is a modified form of 'Governance and Culture: the Catholic Church in Australia' first published in *The Swag*, February 25 2017 and reprinted with permission from the National Council of Priests

'Their cross to bear': Catholic women told to forgive domestic violence

Pope Francis has denounced domestic abuse as 'craven acts of cowardice'. But will the Australian Catholic Church have the courage to answer his call and root out the 'shameful ill-treatment' of women in its midst? And is its all-male hierarchy, still reeling from revelations of child sexual abuse, capable of leading the charge?

By Hayley Gleeson with Julia Baird
4 November 2017

Over the past year ABC News has been investigating the complex relationship between religion and domestic violence, and asking: Are religious attitudes or teachings ever used by abusers to justify intimate partner violence?

Do particular scriptures or religious cultures encourage or allow women in faith communities to remain in abusive relationships? What is the role of faith leaders — the priest, imam or rabbi? And,

given no group is immune from the existence of domestic abuse, and one in four Australian women experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime, with at least one woman killed by a current or former partner every week, how are faith communities in Australia responding to evidence of intimate partner violence in their midst?

In part one of this series, on Islam, we found confusion about whether the Koran allows Muslim men to physically discipline their wives, and that many Australian Imams are risking women's lives by counselling them to remain in abusive marriages. Women are told to endure domestic violence in the name of God. Advocates say the Christian church in Australia is not just failing to sufficiently address domestic violence, but is enabling and concealing it.

In part two, we have been examining the Christian Church, which nominally includes 52 per cent of the Australian population.

Having conducted more than 200 interviews with domestic violence survivors, social workers, clergy, church staff and theologians, we found many women have been told to submit to — and forgive — abusive husbands and endure violent behaviour.

Counsellors and survivors report that biblical verses, particularly in many Protestant churches, are often misused to justify abuse.

In response, the Anglican Church of Australia formally apologised to domestic violence victims who, it acknowledged, had been let down by church leaders and teachings; while the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania pledged to redouble its efforts to address family violence—including by promoting gender equality—in church communities. The Anglican Diocese of Sydney also voted unanimously to apologise for times it had failed victims of domestic abuse, as well as to adopt a comprehensive policy for responding well to violence among church members and leaders.

But what about the Catholic Church, the largest Christian denomination in Australia, to which almost a quarter of Australians say they belong?

Of course, for most Catholics, marriage is a positive and fulfilling union that brings couples intimacy, joy and a sense of wellbeing. It should be. But even the Pope has called on his Church to eliminate the ‘shameful ill-treatment’ of women. And these questions remain: Do certain Catholic conventions or cultures exacerbate domestic violence, or stymie the Church’s response to it?

Do they diminish women, or protect them? Are women being heard? We need to say the same thing about domestic abuse as we have about sexual abuse. Survivors, social workers and advocates for church reform have told ABC News the Church’s strict teachings on divorce and remarriage, an emphasis on forgiveness at all costs and, less directly, the lack of women in its all-male hierarchy, are leading women to remain in, and blame themselves for, violent relationships.

Abused Catholics are often reluctant to leave because, among other complex reasons, doing so means breaking their marriage vows. And in too many cases priests have told women that abuse is their ‘cross to bear’. However, Canon law does not compel women to stay in abusive relationships.

As a spokesperson for the Archdiocese of Melbourne told the ABC: ‘Clergy who counsel victims to remain in abusive marriages for the sake of their marriage do so in contravention of Church teaching. Canon 1151 declares that a lawful reason—the prevalence of domestic violence is one such reason—excuses the obligation to maintain a common life.’

Many experts also believe the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse—which documented decades of allegations of abuse within the Catholic Church and pointed the finger at a culture of clericalism and failure to

protect victims—should convince the Church it needs to take gender inequality and domestic violence more seriously. It should grab hold of that opportunity, they say, if it wants to avoid repeating past mistakes.

Sharon O’Brien, the director of Catholics for Family Peace, a domestic violence education and research initiative at the Catholic University of America, says:

The Church’s global sexual abuse scandal has until recently diverted its attention from the question of family violence. We should have been able to address both. When the issue first broke, people [in the Catholic Church] had known about clergy sex abuse for years. They didn’t know what to do, who to talk to, or how to solve it. But now there is a solution, there is a model for how to respond to it. And we’ll do the same thing with abuse and violence in Catholic marriages. We need to get to a point where we say the same thing about violence and abuse in Catholic marriages as we have about sexual abuse—that it’s not okay.

Why isn’t family violence a priority for the Catholic Church? Until recently, tending to the problem of domestic violence had been considered the domain not of the Catholic Church’s hierarchy but its numerous charities and social welfare agencies which run frontline services for the broader community, including crisis accommodation, counselling, perpetrator behaviour-change programs and court support.

In the past couple of years, however, a handful of Catholic churches in Australia have begun to take action.

These efforts have been motivated largely by the findings of Victoria’s Royal Commission into Family Violence in 2016, and Queensland’s Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in 2015, both of which found the Church, along with other faith communities, was perpetuating domestic violence in its fold.

The royal commission’s final report, tabled in March 2016, identified religious leaders—almost all of whom are men—as a particular ‘challenge’. Many abused women who sought their help were told the abuse was their fault, or that they should stay in ‘intolerable’ situations.

This is an abridged version. For the full text, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwn7GytZPXQ>

Re-imagining the Parish for the 21st Century

The following is proposed as an example of how a parish might be reformed. Currently, the parish is seen to be a territorial entity headed by a Parish Priest, commissioned by the Bishop of the Diocese. It is an ancient feudal arrangement which lends itself to clericalism.

Proposal: To view the parish as a Eucharistic community; that is:

- ◆ A community of the faithful who congregate for the Eucharist in a specified church—no boundaries; church viewed as the centre for the congregation.¹
- ◆ A cluster of such communities form a mission operated by one or more priest-missioners who cycle the parish communities on a regular basis. While resident at a particular place, he celebrates the Eucharist, is available for Reconciliation, counselling, ministry to the sick, guidance of Pastoral Council and Team, discernment and fostering of charisms. He enters as part of the circle of the faithful.
- ◆ The parish *as a whole* is pastor of souls, run by a Pastoral Council (which recognises and develops the charisms of parishioners) and a Pastoral Team.

The Pastoral Team consists of:

- ◆ Parish Secretary: the point of contact with the priest and bishop
- ◆ Parish manager: care of finances and material needs
- ◆ Liturgist (deacon?): plans and prepares liturgies
- ◆ Catechist: care of education and formation
- ◆ Representatives of the St Vincent de Paul, Prayer Groups, Discussion Groups, etc.
- ◆ Mass, the core Eucharistic experience, is not necessary every Sunday (traditional routine); it is the highlight of the visit of the missionary priest. Mass is celebrated as a 'peak event' in the life of the parish at various intervals.
- ◆ Sunday communion services, (the Eucharist event conducted by parish leaders), look back to the previous Mass and visit by the ordained minister (consecrated hosts), and look forward to the next Mass.
- ◆ As a Eucharistic community, parishioners are encouraged to partake in related devotions (e.g. Benediction, visits to Blessed Sacrament). For them the celebration of the Eucharist is not confined to the action of the Mass, but extends over a larger span of their daily lives leading up to and beyond the actual Mass.

Endnote

¹ From Vatican H, 1970: *The celebration of the Mass ... is the centre of the whole Christian life for the universal Church, the local Church and for each and every one of the faithful.*

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 Allan.walsh@exemail.com.au Tel: 02 4759 1034
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World-wide call for urgent reform of the Catholic Church on Luther's Anniversary

31 October 1517

On the eve of the 500th anniversary of the most significant reform of the Catholic Church leading to the Protestant Reformation, an Australian priest (excommunicated for supporting women priests) has launched a radical program to reform the Catholic Church.

Father Greg Reynolds—founder of Inclusive Catholics, a liberated fringe group of Catholics disillusioned with, and disenfranchised from, the institutional church—is calling for parishioners across the globe to take greater responsibility for their local church.

His plan is for parishes to establish what he calls a 'House of the Laity' to empower church-going Catholics to take responsibility for the life of their parishes.

'The House of the Laity is a structure whereby Catholics can have an official voice in how their parishes are run; currently, there is none,' Fr Reynolds said.

Fr Reynolds has launched a crowd-funding campaign to develop a kit for Catholic laity to establish their own House of the Laity and run their local parish in partnership with the parish priest.

The kit will include a step-by-step guide of how to implement a House of the Laity. 'I believe most priests would welcome the support that this initiative would provide them', Fr Reynolds said. 'Currently, all the responsibility of the governance of a parish falls on the shoulders of the local priest; parishioners can only advise through a parish council. With vocations dwindling, and an ageing clergy, this responsibility is becoming more and more onerous. Establishing a House of the Laity will mean that the load is more justly shared and then there can be more genuine co-responsibility between the priest and the laity.'

Fr Reynolds is calling on interested Catholics to help fund the development and distribution of the kit worldwide. 'Martin Luther took a very brave step when he nailed his 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany, on 31 October 1517, opposing abuses of the time. However, without that step the church might still be selling indulgences. In the wake of the revelations of various inquiries internationally into horrendous clerical abuse, a further serious reform is now urgently required.'

To contribute to the crowd-funding campaign to develop and distribute the House of the Laity Kit for Catholics go to:

<https://www.gofundme.com/help-renew-the-catholic-church>

Media enquiries: Sally Gibson +61 409-197-717

www.inclusive-catholics.com

Inclusive Catholics meets on the first and third Sunday of the month at the Glen Iris Uniting Church, 200 Glen Iris Rd, Glen Iris, Victoria, Australia, 3145

New Release

Trapped in a Closed World: Catholic Culture and Sexual Abuse Kevin Peoples

See review by Brian Coyne
Catholica 25 November 2016

Kevin Peoples lives in Melbourne. He is a retired Technical and Further Education (TAFE) teacher and has a Master of Arts Degree in Australian History from the University of Melbourne. As a late vocation to the Catholic priesthood, he returned to complete his secondary education at Chevalier College, Bowral, NSW in 1962. He entered Saint Columba's Seminary, Springwood in 1964 and left in 1966. He is the author of *Santamaria's Salesman* (2012) and *From the Top of the Hill* (2016).

Due to current court proceedings, *Trapped in a Closed World: Catholic Culture and Sexual Abuse*, is not available for sale or distribution in Victoria. To purchase phone

When women become a clear and present danger at the Vatican

Jamie Manson

National Catholic Reporter – 7 June 2017

The story I am about to recount might qualify as joyless and certainly involves being pushed away. But I tell it with the hope that it might help the pope and his brother priests in their discernment about what might need to change.

Last year, Francis declared an *Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy*, and many events were held at the Vatican to celebrate it. On June 1-3 2016, the Vatican hosted a Jubilee for Priests, which concluded with a Mass led by the pope.

In response, leaders at *Women's Ordination Worldwide* and *Women's Ordination Conference* devised an action called 'A Jubilee for Women Priests' to run concurrently with the Vatican's Jubilee for Priests. It involved a peaceful witness in front of Castel Sant'Angelo, just blocks away from St. Peter's Square. Organizers had also secured us tickets to the Mass with the pope. Our message at the witness was simple: God calls men and women to the priesthood.

With the help of an Italian citizen, a permit was obtained for the protest in front of Castel Sant'Angelo, a site that, we hoped, priests would be walking past on their way to concelebrate the Mass at St. Peter's. But it was the police, rather than priests, who were there to greet us that morning.

Six members of the Roman *Polizia* interrogated our organizers, scrutinized our permit and tried to find a reason to end our witness before it even started. The chief negotiator for the Roman police, a female officer, patiently spoke to our organizers while five male officers encircled them. She told us that normally her unit is charged with protecting the Vatican from terrorist threats, but that day they had been assigned to watch us. Throughout the negotiations, she made several cellphone calls to the chief of the *Corpo della Gendarmeria*, the Vatican's police and security force.

Our organizers told the police that we also had tickets to the papal Mass, which was set to begin just after our witness concluded. Looking at the

tickets, she said, 'Oh, you are pilgrims'. Suddenly the police were keen to keep us in place, and insisted on 'escorting' us to St. Peter's Square. Our band of nine women witnesses would not be permitted to walk to the Vatican on our own.

The most intensive negotiation surrounded a female Anglican priest who had joined our witness in solidarity. She is one of a handful of Anglican priests who serve in Rome and she was wearing a Roman collar, as she does most days as an ordained minister. We explained in detail why she was entitled to wear a priest's collar. 'I understand who she is and why she can wear it,' the officer said, motioning with her arm toward St. Peter's Basilica in the distance. 'But *they* will not understand. It will make them uncomfortable. They've never seen it before.' Our witness was allowed to carry on. We prayed, sang and spoke to the media about our belief that women, too, have a vocation to the priesthood.

The nine of us were then marched, two by two, up the Via della Conciliazione. Two police officers led us at the front of our line and two held up the rear. Two police cars, one marked and one unmarked, tailed us on either side. The officers inside glared at us as they cruised along. When we at last arrived at the Vatican's barricades, we were met with a dozen new security officials, some from the Roman police, others from the Vatican's *Gendarmeria*, and still others who were unidentified men in black suits. We were outnumbered two-to-one by officers from various security agencies, some of whom spoke to us from behind a barrier that separated us from St. Peter's Square.

While other pilgrims were herded onto the square with the most cursory glance at their belongings, we were held as a group and subjected to a thorough search of our bags. I was carrying a small satchel with a fresh blouse inside. The security officer whipped the shirt out, shook it violently in the air, and then threw it back into my arms. It took me a moment to realize that he wasn't looking for a weapon; he was looking for a clerical collar. They confiscated our banners, flyers and buttons. They were adamant about searching our bags for priests' stoles. 'Whatever you do, you cannot wear a stole on St. Peter's Square,' the policewoman warned us. 'It will be considered a provocation.' All of our confiscated items were taken to the police station on the square. We were told that we could pick them up after the Mass had concluded.

When the police were at last satisfied that our threatening materials had been neutralized, we were

led through metal detectors and shown to our seats. Francis was visible in the distance, surrounded by thousands of men in albs and stoles.

A member of the Vatican security force was posted in front of us, and another on the aisle. Their eyes were trained particularly on our Anglican priest supporter and her collar. About 30 minutes into the liturgy, the Anglican priest left the Mass to attend to her own church. The security guards, who perhaps had gotten bored of watching us watch the liturgy, hadn't noticed her departure. When they realized she was missing from our row, a minor panic broke out. One of the guards approached us demanding to know where she was. When we assured them she had left to return to work, they searched for her among the crowd. Their worry, it became clear, was that she was going to try to slip in among the male priests and create a disturbance. Or worse, try to concelebrate. They never found her.

When the time for Communion came, dozens of priests were dispatched to give out the Eucharist. When one of our organizers put out her hands to receive, the priest rebuffed her. 'I have to put it in your mouth and I need to see you to swallow it,' he said. When she refused, he walked away, denying her Communion. A brief heated exchange ensued between her and the priest. Another priest, hearing the commotion, quietly placed a wafer in her hands.

It was an undignified conclusion to a remarkably demeaning day. Though it is unlikely that those priests knew who we were, the symbolism of a woman stretching out her hand in a desire for Communion, only to be degraded, dictated to, and sent away empty seemed like an apt ritualization of our experience.

A year after this incident, my hope is that as Francis contemplates what can be learned from the supposed vocations crisis, he might somehow hear this account and other women's stories like it. Perhaps he will recognize what we learned that day in Rome: There is a radical lack of hospitality or goodwill shown toward any person who dares to say that God calls women to ordained ministry in the church.

Standing so close the pope as he spoke in St. Peter's Square, I wondered how this man, who washes the feet of female prisoners, would have felt if he'd known that, just a hundred yards away, we were being treated like credible threats on a watch list. How would he have felt if he knew that, in his declared Year of Mercy, as thousands of priests were being feted and forgiven, we were shown no compassion? Instead, we were regarded with suspicion and derision. What would he have thought if he knew that, in the midst of the culture of encounter that he was trying to cultivate, we were being handled like a clear and present danger?

Hearing our stories, perhaps the pope would have begun to realize that there is, in fact, no vocations crisis at all. There is, however, a crisis of sacramental imagination on the part of the church's hierarchy.

Francis has won legions of followers precisely because he sees the presence of God in the bodies of the sick, the suffering, the homeless and the destitute. Yet he still cannot see God's presence in the women who long to serve and lead the church and celebrate its sacraments with God's people.

Francis is right. The institutional church has contributed to the vocations crisis. But it isn't worldliness or joylessness that pushes people away from vocations. It is the institutional church's rigid refusal to hear the voices of women called to be priests and the voice of God who calls them.

Until the pope and his brother priests can listen to women, rather than silencing them, and see God working sacramentally through women, rather than treating women as a threat to be controlled, they will have little hope of learning from a problem they themselves have created or addressing a crisis that they alone can fix.

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Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church

Guiding Questions and Research Strategy

Extract from report by

Professor Desmond Cahill and Dr Peter Wilkinson

Centre for Global Research School of Global Urban and Social Studies

RMIT UNIVERSITY, MELBOURNE, August 2017

The scandal and tragedy of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church

While variously described as a problem or crisis or scandal or nightmare or scourge, the sexual and emotional abuse of children within Catholic settings by priests, religious brothers and sisters, is ultimately a tragedy of immense proportions. Novello (2015) calls it the Church's Biblical lament, while for Coldrey (2004) it is a Christian apocalypse. For Abbate (2012), it is the Church's Golgotha. The ravished innocence of the child—abused, assaulted, violated, raped and sodomised—lies at the very centre of this Catholic catastrophe. Many thousands of lives across the world have been badly damaged, if not destroyed, in the continuing and tragic saga of the sexual abuse of children which can be traced back to New Testament times in the first century as we shall see. It has become an unholy mess. A priest offender has reflected, *'...and what would God think?'*¹

The tragedy is further compounded by the knowledge that the Catholic Church has during that time educated and cared for millions of children, even in the most scarifying of circumstances, giving them bright, fulfilling and transcendent futures. Jesus, living in his contemporary Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts, overturned the concept of the child. He told his adult followers that they must become like little children (Mt 18, 2), and witheringly denounced those who might harm a child: *'Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck*

and to be drowned in the depths of the sea' (Mt 18, 6). In his view, children are important; they have status and they have standing. He scolds his disciples for preventing parents from bringing their children to him: *'Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs'* (Lk 18, 16). Zelyck (2017), writing for the periodical of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, reflects on Mt 18, 1-14 how Jesus presents eschatological warnings of divine retribution for those who sexually abuse children. He notes that the verb 'scandalizo', used by Jesus and rarely used in or outside the Bible, has a strong sexual connotation.

The Maronite poet, Khalil Gibran, has reflected in his poem on the mystery of the child:

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you. And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

On 27 September 2015, in a press briefing during an official visit to the United States soon after Pope Francis had met with survivors saying that 'God weeps for the sexual abuse of children', the Vatican's chief spokesperson, Fr. Federico Lombardi, SJ, admitted to the global nature of the issue, which he described as 'a universal problem in the universal Church everywhere' (McElwee 2015).

The Jesuit historian, John W O'Malley (2002), has reflected that, while it is true that there have been 'scandals aplenty' in the Catholic Church's long and twisting history, there has been nothing

like the child sexual abuse scandal. Among its differentiating characteristics in his view has been its clearly systemic and global nature, the accompanying crisis in Church authority that remains unresolved, the abundance of documentary evidence, and the public scrutiny by criminal courts, government inquiries and media reports. It has not been a scandal arising from isolated instances by clergy or prominent laity or the mishandling of individual cases by individual dioceses. The sheer number of cases has led to:

...a growing and widespread persuasion that the scandal has occurred not simply because of the moral weaknesses that touch us all, including bishops, but because there is some underlying systemic cause....Which part of the system needs to be changed? That is the absolutely critical question (O'Malley 2002: 15).

Paraphrasing Lord Acton that power corrupts and ecclesiastical power corrupts ecclesiastically, O'Malley suggests that at this time when public suspicion and criticism of those with ecclesiastical power has never been greater, there is no longer any benefit of the doubt in relation to the Church's doctrine, discipline, or any of its public statements (O'Malley 2002).

Historical parallels

Probably the closest historical parallel in church history is the connected issue of confessional soliciting where, in confession both before and after the invention of the confessional box, the priest confessor made sexual overtures or engaged in actual genital activity with the penitent. The topic was very under-researched by church historians until the 1996 scholarly monograph of Stephen Haliczer, an expert in Spanish history. Using only complete file cases, he examined 223 such cases adjudicated by the Spanish Inquisition between 1530 and 1819. Of these solicitation cases, 6.3 per cent of the victims were under the age of 15 (Haliczer 1996) – this is a significant figure because at that time children generally made their First Confession followed by their First Communion at the age of 12–14, a practice that would not be changed until the 1910 decree, *Quam Singulari*, of Pope Pius X (1903–

1914) which lowered the age to 7, when children were considered to have reached 'the age of reason'. Not long after, in 1922, the Vatican issued a secret document to Catholic bishops on confessional soliciting entitled *Crimen Sollicitationis*, which also condemned clergy child sexual abuse, homosexuality and bestiality. A revised version of *Crimen Sollicitationis* was reissued in 1962. Waters (2016) notes that both documents were to be carefully kept in the secret archives of the bishop.

Instead of the more public ecclesiastical courts, the Spanish Inquisition trials were conducted in secrecy in order that: the nightmare of respected members of the clergy being brought to trial for solicitation and publicly excoriated could be avoided by using the Inquisition because its proceedings were secret and even the sentencing and reconciliation of offenders could be carried on behind closed doors (Haliczer 1996: 55).

Throughout the centuries, Catholic Church authorities strove massively to keep such sexual topics away from public view. However, with the advent of radio and television combined with the arrival of investigative journalism, the maintenance of such secrecy was always doomed to failure, notwithstanding that *Crimen Sollicitationis* ordered that canonical trials of clergy accused of solicitation, homosexuality, bestiality and child sexual abuse were to be covered by the permanent 'secret of the Holy Office', the penalty for violating which was excommunication. The secret of the Holy Office was superseded in 1974 by the introduction of the Pontifical Secret by Pope Paul VI.³

Another possible parallel of priestly failure is that of Polish priest informers who were recruited by the Communist secret police and often compromised because of sexual liaisons with adult partners, female or male, or because they had sexually assaulted children or stolen church funds (Pruzac 2014). Isakowicz-Zaleski, born in 1956 and who himself was tortured as a priest by the *Sluzba Bezpieczenstwa* (SB, or secret police), has found from its files that 37 priests of the Archdiocese of Krakow had been regime collaborators between 1944 and 1989. In her analysis of the priests in the Archdiocese of Lublin, Kosobudska found the collaboration incidence was about ten per cent (see

Kosobudska 2011). Ruzikowski (2003) estimates that in 1977, 14.91 per cent of Polish priests were informers according to the files held in the Institute of National Remembrance (see also Overbeek 2013).

Sexuality and the eruption of religious pathologies

According to the psychologists, authentic religion is about believing, bonding, behaving and belonging, and its beneficial personal and community outcomes have been empirically demonstrated by the social sciences (Saroglou 2011). In the emerging global and post-secular world, we live in a very religious world and research continues to demonstrate that religion, on balance, adds to personal well-being and national social wealth, including in Australia (see Cahill, Bouma, Dellal & Leahy 2004; Saroglou 2011). In addressing the interface between religion, spirituality, sexuality and deviance, this monograph is dealing with very sensitive, complex, and difficult issues.

It needs to be recognised that fundamentalisms and pathologies can erupt in religious organisations and institutions (McLoon-Richards 2012). Given the spread and standing of the Catholic Church, the tragedy of child sexual abuse can rightfully be seen

as a global health issue (Purvis & Joyce 2005) and a global criminal issue, as well as a global institutional issue for the Church itself. The second US John Jay Report of 2011 noted that its study of clerical sex abuse in the USA has provided a framework for understanding not only the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests, but the sexual victimisation of children in any institution or any society. No other institution where there has been systematic abuse of children has undertaken such a public study of sexual abuse as the Catholic Church in the USA (John Jay Reports 2004, 2011). Increasingly across the world, research is leading us to an understanding of why this tragedy of child violation has occurred, why Church authorities responded so poorly, and what still needs to be done.

Footnotes

- 1 This was said by an Australian priest offender who did not begin abusing a child until in his fifties. He was one of the 12 interviewees for the Ph.D. study by Jacqueline Winship (2012) in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Sydney.
- 2 Taken from Gibran, K. (1973) *The Prophet* (London: William Heinemann) p.20.
- 3 The instruction *Secreta Continere* was issued by the Secretariat of State on 4 February 1974 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 1974, 89-92).

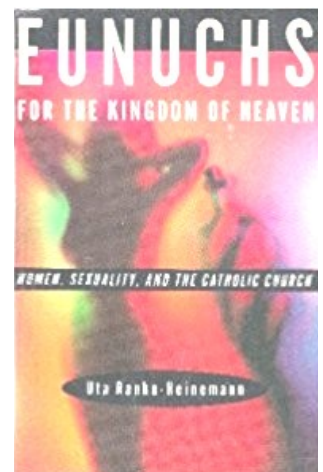
Putting Away Childish Things: The Virgin Birth, the Empty Tomb, and Other Fairy Tales You Don't Need to Believe to Have a Living Faith:
1994

Uta Ranke-Heinemann
and Peter Heinegg

Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven: Women, Sexuality, and the Catholic Church:
1990

Uta Ranke-Heinemann

These two books are available in English on Amazon—their contents are still relevant today for those of us who struggle with our faith—and our doubts.





Concerned Catholics

Canberra-Goulburn

Press release

Catholic bishops must reform now to quell exodus

1 November 2017

Canberra Catholic reform group is calling on the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference this month to urgently begin structural reforms to counter deepening disillusion and disaffection among their flock.

The group, Concerned Catholics of Canberra Goulburn, is urging the bishops to establish diocesan pastoral councils now to enable lay people to participate fully in the response to the report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse expected at the end of the year.

Concerned Catholics, established earlier this year, has put to the bishops a nine-point plan for reform including addressing the issue of compulsory celibacy for priests, support for equal participation of women at all levels of church decision-making and the removal of canon law obstacles to the reform of the Church in Australia.

The Chairman of Concerned Catholics, Emeritus Professor John Warhurst, has written to Archbishop Mark Coleridge and other bishops urging them to start now to ensure lay people have an effective role and voice in the direction of the Church on vital issues including greater accountability, women's participation in decision-making and lay leadership.

Professor Warhurst said that, while indications of reform had been made by Archbishop Coleridge, there remained as yet no substance to talk of fresh directions by the Australian Church.

Archbishop Coleridge has sought agreement from the Vatican in Rome to hold a national plenary council or synod in Australia in 2020 which he has said will play 'a critical role in shaping the Church's future'.

Professor Warhurst said: 'If we are to move away from the inward-looking Church dominated by older men, to an open, vibrant movement, we urgently need the bishops to allow and encourage the laity, including women, to take leadership positions in running the Church. Forming pastoral councils with strong lay leadership is vital to ensure the views of parishioners are reflected in response to the Commission's report and at the 2020 plenary.'

'Without new processes and a clear direction on how things will change, there is vagueness and apparent absence of substance to the proposed process. As concerned Catholics, we request more information on the proposed way forward and the role that the laity will play in a collaborative process.'

'The current structural weakness of the Australian Church is a barrier to achieving transparent and inclusive consideration of a reform agenda.'

'The responses we have had at two public meetings organised by Concerned Catholics and attended each time by more than 200 people indicate there are many people anxious for a credible response to the Commission's report and for effective reform of the Church,' Professor Warhurst said.

Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn is a group in the Archdiocese concerned about a number of governance, cultural and structural issues arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. We seek an effective voice for lay people in the administration and direction of our church. □

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